

1A – Appreciation

One afternoon a man came home from work to find total mayhem in his house. His three children were outside, still in their pajamas, playing in the mud, with empty food boxes and wrappers strewn all around the front yard. The door of his wife's car was open, as was the front door to the house. Proceeding into the entry, he found an even bigger mess. A lamp had been knocked over, and the throw rug was wadded against one wall. In the front room the TV was loudly blaring a cartoon channel, and the family room was strewn with toys and various items of clothing. In the kitchen, dishes filled the sink, breakfast food was spilled on the counter, dog food was spilled on the floor, a broken glass lay under the table, and a small pile of sand was spread by the back door.

He quickly headed up the stairs, stepping over toys and more piles of clothes, looking for his wife. He was worried she may be ill, or that something serious had happened.

1B – Appreciation

He found her lounging in the bedroom, still curled in the bed in her pajamas, reading a novel. She looked up at him, smiled, and asked how his day went.

He looked at her bewildered and asked, "What happened here today?"

She again smiled and answered, "You know every day when you come home from work and ask me what in the world I did today?"

"Yes" was his incredulous reply.

She answered, "Well, today I didn't do it."

2A – Hot Air Balloon (Management)

A man in a hot air balloon realized he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a woman below. He descended a bit more and shouted,

"Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."

The woman below replied, "You're in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You're between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and between 59 and 60 degrees west longitude."

"You must be an engineer," said the balloonist. "I am," replied the woman, "How did you know?"

"Well," answered the balloonist, "everything you told me is, technically correct, but I've no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is I'm still lost."

2B – Hot Air Balloon (Management)

Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you've delayed my trip."

The woman below responded, "You must be in Management."

"I am," replied the balloonist, "but how did you know?"

"Well," said the woman, "you don't know where you are or where you're going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise which you've no idea how to keep, and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my fault."

3 – Bargain with God

God asked Adam, "What's wrong with you?"

Adam said he didn't have anyone to talk to.

So, God said he was going to make Adam a companion and that it would be a woman.

God said, "This person will gather food for you, and when you discover clothing she'll wash it for you. She will always agree with every decision you make. She will bear your children and never ask you to get up in the middle of the night to take care of them. She will never nag you, and she will always be the first to admit she was wrong when you've had a disagreement. She will never have a headache and will freely give you love and passion whenever you need it."

Adam asked God, "What will a woman like this cost?"

God replied, "An arm and a leg."

Then Adam asked, "What can I get for a rib?"

The JOHN MAXWELL **Team**

4 – What the team needs

While he was manager of the Chicago Cubs, Charlie Grimm reportedly received a phone call from one of his scouts. The man was excited and began to shout over the telephone, "Charlie, I've landed the greatest young pitcher in the land! He Struck out every man who came to bat. Twenty-seven in a row. Nobody even hit a foul until the ninth inning. The pitcher is right here with me. What shall I do?"

Charlie replied, "Sign up the guy who got the foul. We're looking for hitters."

Charlie knew what the team needed.

5 – Clear communication

Communication is positive interaction. When communication is one-sided, it can be comical. You may have heard the story of the frustrated judge preparing to hear a divorce case: "Why do you want a divorce?" the judge asked. "On what grounds?"

"All over. We have an acre and a half," responded the woman.

"No, no," said the judge. "Do you have a grudge?"

"Yes sir fits two cars."

"I need a reason for the divorce," said the judge impatiently. "Does he beat you up?"

"Oh no. I'm up at six every day to do my exercises. He gets up later."

"Please," said the exasperated judge. "What is the reason you want a divorce?"

"Oh," she replied. "We can't seem to communicate with each other."

6 – Clear communication

The important thing is that all the team members take a role that fits the goals and needs of the organization as well as their own personal talents and abilities. When any role is not filled, the whole team suffers. One day a farmer was sitting on his porch noticing a highway department truck pulling over on the shoulder of the road. A man got out, dug a sizeable hole in the ditch, and got back into the vehicle. A few minutes later, the other occupant of the truck got out, filled up the hole, tamped the dirt, and got back in the truck. Then they drove forward on the shoulder about fifty yards and repeated the process - digging, waiting, refilling. After a half-dozen repetitions, the farmer sauntered over to them.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"We're on a highway beautification project," the driver said. "And the guy who plants the trees is home sick today."

7 – Communication Process

Another important part of the communication process is huddling. When a team huddles, it recalls the game plan and how it is to be implemented. When players don't take time to huddle, the results can be disastrous - or even comical. The story is told of a gentleman who was walking down a residential street when he noticed a man struggling with a washing machine at the doorway of his house. When he volunteered to help, the homeowner was overjoyed, and the two men together began to work and struggle with the bulky appliance. After several minutes of fruitless effort, the two stopped and just looked at each other. They were on the verge of total exhaustion. Finally, when they caught their breath, the first man said to the homeowner,

"We'll never get this washing machine in there!"

To which the homeowner replied: "In? I'm trying to move it out!"

8A – Effective Delegation

Ken Allen states in *The Effective Executive*, "Rarely is delegation failure the subordinate's fault. Maybe you picked the wrong person for the job, didn't train, develop or motivate sufficiently."

If you have had trouble with delegation in the past, don't give up. Try to determine why the problem occurred, learn from it, and give delegation another try. Not having enough time to teach another person to do a job is probably the most common reason people give for not delegating. And not delegating is probably the most common reason people don't have enough time. Inability to delegate due to lack of time is short-term thinking.

Time lost in delegating on the front end is recovered at the back end. For example, let's say a leader takes an hour to perform a certain weekly task.

8B – Effective Delegation

He determines that to teach someone else to do that task, it will take him five hours initially, then an hour a week for the following three weeks. That totals eight hours of his time - one whole day that he will lose out of his busy schedule. He could continue to do the task himself for the next two months by devoting the same amount of time.

However, if he thinks long term, he realizes that by the end of the year, the eight-hour investment he makes will give him an additional forty-four hours of time to do other tasks. That's one whole week of time he has gained! And there is also the added advantage that the employee he has delegated to is better equipped to take on other tasks for him in the future.

To break the vicious lack-of-time cycle, a leader needs the right person to delegate to and a willingness to put in the initial training time.

9 – Growth Environment

There is a story of a tourist who paused for rest in a small town in the mountains. He went over to an old man sitting on a bench in front of the only store in town and inquired, "Friend, can you tell me something this town is noted for?"

"Well," replied the old man, "I don't rightly know except that it's the starting point to the world. You can start here and go anywhere you want."

All people do not view their current location as the starting point to wherever they want to go in the world. We as leaders must encourage those around us to see themselves in such a place. Creating an environment for personal growth is critical.

10 – Growth Environment

A woman moved to a small town. After being there a short time, she complained to her neighbor about the poor service she received at the local drugstore, hoping her new acquaintance would repeat her criticism to the store's owner. The next time the newcomer went to the drugstore, the druggist greeted her with a big smile, told her how happy he was to see her again, and said he hoped she liked their town. He also offered himself as a resource to the woman and her husband as they got settled. Then he took care of her order quickly and efficiently. Later, the woman reported the incredible change to her friend. "I suppose you told him how poor I thought the service was?" she declared.

"Well, no," the neighbor said. "In fact - and I hope you don't mind - I told him you were amazed at the way he had built up this small town drugstore, and that you thought it was one of the best-run drugstores you'd ever seen." That woman's neighbor understood that people respond to respect. In fact, most people will do nearly anything for you if you treat them respectfully.

11 – Encouragement

An experiment was conducted years ago to measure people's capacity to endure pain. Psychologists measured how long a barefooted person could stand in a bucket of ice water. They found that one factor made it possible for some people to stand in the ice water twice as long as the others.

Can you guess what that factor was? It was encouragement. When another person was present, giving support and encouragement, the sufferers were able to endure the pain much longer than their encouraged counterparts.

12A – Visualize their future success

I heard about an experiment performed with laboratory rats to measure their motivation to live under different circumstances. Scientists dropped a rat into a jar of water that had been placed in total darkness, and they timed how long the animal would continue swimming before it gave up and allowed itself to drown. They found that the rat usually lasted little more than three minutes. Then they dropped another rat into the same kind of jar, but instead of placing it in total darkness, they allowed a ray of light to shine into it. Under those circumstances, the rat kept swimming for thirty-six hours.

That's more than seven hundred times longer than the one in the dark!

Because the rat could see, it continued to have hope. If that is true of laboratory animals, think of how strong the effect of visualization can be on people, who are capable of higher reasoning.

12B – Encouragement

It's been said that a person can live forty days without food, four days without water, four minutes without air, but only four seconds without hope.

Each time you cast a vision for others and paint a picture of their future success, you build them up, motivate them, and give them reasons to keep going.

13 – Navigation through blind spots

We heard an amusing story about a husband who wanted to help his wife because he suspected she had a hearing problem. One night he positioned himself across the room from her with her back to him, and softly he said, "Can you hear me?" He didn't get an answer from her, so he moved closer and repeated, "Can you hear me now?"

Still nothing. He moved closer and asked, "Can you hear me?" He heard no response, so finally he repeated the question from directly behind her. She turned to face him and said, "For the fourth time, YES!"

Too many people out there are similar to that husband. They want to succeed and help others, but their misunderstanding or lack of knowledge hinders them. A good navigator recognizes the blind spots in others, gently identifies them, and helps people overcome them.

14 – Don't settle for average

A man went to a fortune-teller to hear what she had to say about his future. She looked into a crystal ball and said, "You will be poor and unhappy until you are forty-five years old."

"Then what will happen?" asked the man hopefully.

"Then you'll get used to it."

I'm sorry to say, that's the way most people live their lives - according to what others believe about them. If the important people in their lives expect them to go nowhere, then that's what they expect for themselves. That's fine if you're surrounded by people who believe in you.

But what if you're not?

15 – Set achievable goals first

Charles Schulz captured a humorous take on this thought in the comic strip Peanuts. After striking out on the baseball field - as usual - Charlie Brown returns to the dugout and slumps down on the bench. "Rats!" he laments. "I'll never be a big league player. I just don't have it. All my life I've dreamed of playing in the big leagues, but I know I'll never make it." Lucy, ever one to give advice, replies, "Charlie Brown, you're thinking too far ahead. What you need to do is set more immediate goals for yourself."

"Immediate goals?" Charlie asks. Like many people, he has never considered such a thing. "Yes," Lucy advises, "start with the next inning. When you go out to pitch, see if you can walk out to the mound without falling down!"

Industrialist Ian McGregor observed, "I work on the same principle as people who train horses. You start with low fences, easily achieved goals, and work up. It's important in management never to ask people to try to accomplish goals they can't accept."

16 – Discipline to develop consistency

What does it take to develop consistency? A system and the discipline to follow through. I came across the story of an older gentleman at the funeral of fiery NBA basketball coach Bill Musselman in 2000 who approached Bill's son Eric to tell him a story.

The gentleman said he was driving down a two-lane highway on the way to Orville, Ohio, when he saw a boy about eleven years old dribbling a basketball with his right hand along the side of the road. The man said he pulled over and asked the boy, "Where are you going?"

Without stopping dribbling, the boy replied, "Orville."

"Do you know Orville is ten miles away?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What are you going to do when you get there?"

"Dribble back home with my left hand."

The old man looked at Eric and said, "That boy was your father."

Now that's what I call creating a system and having the discipline to follow through on it!

17 – Stretch: Shoot the muskrats

Few people want to stretch - There's a joke about a longtime handyman named Sam who was once offered a full-time job by a mill owner who was having problems with muskrats at the mill's dam. The owner asked Sam to rid the mill of the pests and even provided a rifle for him to do the job. Sam was ecstatic because it was the first steady work with a regular paycheck that he'd ever gotten. One day, several months later, a friend came to visit Sam. He found him sitting on a grassy bank, the gun across his knees. "Hey Sam, whatcha doin'?" he asked.

"My job, guarding the dam."

"From what?"

"Muskrats." His friend looked over at the dam, and just at that moment a muskrat appeared. "There's one!" the friend exclaimed. "Shoot him!" Sam didn't move. Meanwhile the muskrat scurried away. "Why the heck didn't' you shoot him?"

"Are you crazy?" replied Sam. "Do you think I want to lose my job?"

18 – Curiosity: What did the cat want to know?

Management expert Peter Drucker said, "My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions."

That's having a beginner's mind-set. People with a beginner's mind-set approach life the way that a child does: with curiosity. They are like the little girl who kept asking her mother question after question.

Finally the mother cried, "For heaven's sake, stop asking so many questions. Curiosity killed the cat."

After two minutes of thinking, the little girl asked, "So what did the cat want to know?"

Albert Einstein said, "The important thing is not to stop questioning."

19 – Curiosity: What did the cat want to know?

A good mentor possesses wisdom - There's a well known story of an expert who was called by a company to look at their manufacturing system. It had broken and everything was at a standstill. When the expert arrived, he carried nothing but a little black bag. Silently he walked around the equipment for a few minutes and then stopped. As he focused on one specific area of the equipment, he pulled a small hammer out of his bag and he tapped gently. Suddenly, everything began running again and he quietly left. The next day he sent a bill that made the manager go ballistic. It was for \$1,000! Quickly the manager e-mailed the expert and wrote, "I will not pay this outrageous bill without it being itemized and explained." Soon he received an invoice with the following words: "For the tapping on equipment with hammer - \$1. For knowing where to tap - \$999" That's the value of wisdom! Mentors with wisdom often show us where to tap. Their understanding, experience, and knowledge help us to solve problems that we would have a hard time handling on our own.

20A – Growth minded: Letter of appreciation from Deputy

One of the greatest rewards I receive from writing and speaking is occasionally hearing from someone who has been positively impacted by my work. Recently I received a letter from Tim Williams, a sergeant who works for the county sheriff's office in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He wrote to tell me about the intentional-growth path he has been taking and how it has expanded his capacity. Tim wrote, "As a part of my promotional testing process in 2005, I was required to read The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership. I had told myself that I would first read each of the books I was assigned, then re-read each, and finally skim each with a highlighter to obtain possible test questions. My first read of The 21 Laws did not leave me with a favorable opinion. My re-read left me feeling better and agreeing with most of it.

As I skimmed it I came to the conclusion that I had been under a leadership rock for the better part of my life. Prior to being a sergeant with the sheriff's office I had spent twenty years as a sergeant in the U.S. Army Special Forces, so I didn't consider leadership a new concept."

20B – Growth minded: Letter of appreciation from Deputy

Tim went on to say that he continues to read books as part of his growth plan. They have changed his thinking- and his actions. As a result, he has continued to advance within the organization. "As I was promoted in rank," he wrote, "I have also been able to institute several changes within my organization that I credit directly to what I have learned...I have been able to influence others and help many." Tim has adopted two practices as a result of what he's learned. The first is that he goes to where his employees are.

Tim said, "I spent my nights in the jail going from station to station visiting with deputies and just talking about anything. I listened, laughed, and just spent time hearing about their families and on some occasions their complaints." As a result, he started connecting with people. The second was writing personal notes to people to let them know that he cares about them and appreciates their work He also became very intentional about noting in their evaluations the positive things his employees did, not just their deficiencies. "The increase in morale was amazing," said Tim. Tim went on to say, "At year's end I decided to take this one step further and send an e-mail to all those assigned to my shift.

The JOHN MAXWELL **Team**

20C – Growth minded: Letter of appreciation from Deputy

I wanted it to be positive and transparent to all. I have made this an annual event and the results have been fantastic! My shift sick-time usage dropped markedly. I've enclosed the first edition of what I call 'Thanks, I Noticed'"

"Shift 4, As we come to the end of the year, I wanted to take a moment and reflect on the things that all of you have done individually to make my life easier as a supervisor. Because of the competitive nature of this profession we share, I want all of you to collectively know what you have done for each other. As this year has passed, in some way each of you has contributed to the success that we all share. So for all the little things that you may have thought went unnoticed, please let me say, Thank you, I noticed:

Michael B., for giving up your two planned holidays so that we would have enough people to cover the shift, for volunteering for the paint detail on your days off, for the math project, for taking on the Academy Instructor challenge. Thank you, I noticed.

Bruce B., for coming to work in pain unable to hear when you could have easily called off, for being my straight-man in briefings and asking the questions others wanted to, for working through adversity, Thank you, I noticed.

20D – Growth minded: Letter of appreciation from Deputy

Rosemarie P., for reminding me what I was forgetting, for giving up your slot as part of my grand plan for Layne D, for always looking out for me. Thank you, I noticed.

Kelly S., for always being willing to change your assignment, for coming in when you could have easily called off, for helping us set the record for the most people ever to change a tire in the middle of the night, Thank you, I noticed.

John W., for being my first Lead Deputy as a Deputy II new to the shift and knowing very well you'd take the heat for it, you did it with incredible character. Thank you, I noticed."

As a deputy sergeant and a retired Special Forces noncommissioned officer, Tim Williams could have said, "I've been a leader for more than twenty years. I know what it is to lead, even when people's lives are on the line. I'm done learning. I will rely on my experience and finish out my career, and people better just do what I say!" He could have, but he didn't. Instead, he was open to growth He decided to continue to be a learner. And for that reason, his life, his influence, and his potential continue to expand. He lives the Law of Expansion: Growth always increases your capacity.

21 – Attitude: Mother and Daughter shopping

A mother and her adult daughter were out shopping one day, trying to make the most of a big sale weekend before Christmas. As they went from store to store in the mall, the older woman complained about everything; the crowds, the poor quality of the merchandise, the prices, and her sore feet.

After the mother experienced a particularly difficult interaction with a clerk in one department store, she turned to her daughter and said, "I'm never going back to that store again. Did you see the dirty look she gave me?"

The daughter answered, "She didn't give it to you, Mom. You had it when you went in!"

22 – Attitude: humility in prayer

Not long ago I came across a prayer that I thought was wonderful. It said,

“Dear Lord, So far today I am doing all right. I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or self-indulgent. I have not whined, cursed, or eaten any chocolate.

However, I am going to get out of bed in a few minutes, and I will need a lot more help after that. Amen.”

23A – Focus on one thing: Charles Schwab

Plan your time carefully - I once read that Charles Schwab, president of Bethlehem Steel in the early twentieth century, met with public relationships and management consultant Ivy Lee because he wanted to improve his company's productivity. "We know what we should be doing," explained Schwab. "Now, if you can show us a better way of getting it done, I'll listen to you - and pay you anything within reason."

Lee said that he could help him, and that it would take only twenty minutes of his time. He handed Schwab a blank sheet of paper and said, "Write down the six most important things you have to do tomorrow." Schwab complied. "Now number them in order of their importance to you and the company." When Schwab had finished, Lee continued, "Now put that paper in your pocket, and first thing tomorrow morning, take it out and look at item number one. Don't look at the others, just number one, and start working on it and stay with it until it's completed."

23B – Focus on one thing: Charles Schwab

...Then take item number two the same way, then number three, and so on until you have to quit for the day. Don't worry if you have finished only one or two. You'll be working on the most important ones. The others you could not have finished with any other method. And without some kind of system, you'd probably take ten times as long to finish them - and might not even have them in the order of their importance.

Do this every workday," said Lee. "After you're convinced of the value of this system, have your people try it out. Try it as long as you like, and then send me a check for whatever you think the idea is worth."

In a few weeks, Schwab sent Lee a check for \$25,000 along with a letter saying that it was the most profitable lesson he had ever learned. Not long after that, Bethlehem Steel became the largest independent steel producer of its day.

24 – Take care of your health

My friend Zig Ziglar asks the question,
“If you had a million-dollar racehorse, would you allow it to smoke cigarettes, drink whiskey, and stay out all night? How about a thousand-dollar dog?”

Of course you wouldn't. A thoroughbred horse that was not taken care of would never be capable of winning a race. A dog whose health ran down would not work effectively or show well.

The real question is, if you wouldn't allow your animals to do such things, then why would you allow yourself to?

25A – Eat Right

One day an old couple died in a car crash. They had been married for sixty years, and they were in excellent health due to the wife's insistence that they exercise and adhere to a healthy diet. In heaven, St. Peter met them at the gate and ushered them to their mansion. It was equipped with a massive kitchen, an elegant master suite, and a Jacuzzi.

"This is wonderful," said the man. "But how much is it going to cost us?"

"Nothing, of course" answered St. Peter "This is heaven." He then ushered the couple outside and showed them that their house was on the eighteenth fairway of a golf course exactly like that at Augusta. "You can play as much golf as you like," Said St. Peter. "This week it's Augusta. Next week it's Pebble Beach, then St. Andrews – you can check out the schedule in the pro shop."

"This is unbelievable!" said the man. "What are the green fees?"

"There are no green fees in heaven. It's free." Said St. Peter.

Next they visited the clubhouse buffet. It had steamed lobsters, caviar, prime rib, exotic fowl, every kind of vegetable prepared to perfection,

25B – Eat Right

fresh-baked breads, mounds of sweet butter, and a dessert table that took their breath away. “What do we have to pay to eat?” Asked the old man. “Don’t you understand?” said St. Peter, exasperated. “This is heaven! The food is free. Everything is free!”

“Okay,” replied the old man, “but where are the low-cal and low fat food tables?”

“That’s the best part,” said St. Peter. “You can eat as much as you want, and you’ll never get fat or sick.”

The old man went ballistic. He threw down his hat, stomped on it, and tore around the room screaming. When St. Peter and the man’s wife finally calmed him down enough to speak, he looked at his wife and said, “This is all your fault! If it weren’t for your blasted bran muffins, we could have been here ten years ago!”

It was Mark Twain who observed that “The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don’t want, drink what you don’t like, and do what you’d rather not.”

26 – Faith: Put God in the picture

There's a story of a man driving a convertible on a mountain road who took an unexpected turn too quickly and went right over the edge. As his car fell, he managed to grab on to a tree sprouting from the cliff face as his car dropped a thousand feet to the canyon floor. "Help!" he screamed. "Can anyone hear me?" An echo was the only response.

"God, can you hear me?" he cried. Suddenly, the clouds rolled together and a voice like thunder said, "Yes, I can hear you." "Will you help me?"

"Yes, I will help you. Do you believe in me?"

"Yes, I believe in You."

"Do you trust me?"

"Yes, yes, I trust you. Please, hurry."

"If you trust me, then let go of the tree." Thundered the voice. After a long silence, the man cried, "Can anyone else hear me?"

If you want to embrace faith, you must let God into your life.

"Unbelief puts our circumstances between us and God. Faith puts God between us and our circumstances." F.B. Meyer

27 – Understand people

If you desire to improve your understanding of people so that you can build positive relationships, then keep in mind the following truths about people – and actions you can take to bridge the gap often caused by them:

- People are insecure...give them confidence
- People want to feel special...sincerely compliment them
- People desire a better tomorrow...show them hope
- People need to be understood...listen to them
- People are selfish...speak to their needs first
- People get emotionally low...encourage them
- People want to be associated with success...help them win

When you understand people, don't take their shortcomings personally, and help them to succeed, you lay the groundwork for good relationships.

28 – Giving adds value to others

One of the most significant things a person can do while on this earth is to help others. In this life, the measure of a person isn't the number of people who serve him or the amount of money he amasses; it's how many people he serves. The greater your giving, the greater you're living.

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson said it this way; "You are not here to merely make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand."

No one stands taller in the climb to success than when he bends over to help up someone else. When you add value to others, you do not take anything away from yourself.

29 – Paradigm

I continue to work at learning how others think and perceive the world. Recently I read a book by Terry Felber called: *Am I Making Myself Clear?* He says that people have different representational systems based on the five senses, which provide the primary basis for their thoughts and feelings. For example, if several people walked down the beach together, their recollections of the experience would be very different based on their representational system. One might remember how the sun felt on his skin and the sand on his feet. One might remember the look of the water and the vivid colors of the sunset. The third might be able to describe the sounds of the ocean and birds, and another the smell of the salt air and the tanning lotion of nearby sunbathers. Each of us creates a framework for the way we process information.

Felber says, “If you can learn to pinpoint how those around you experience the world, and really try to experience the same world they do, you’ll be amazed at how effective your communication will become.”

30 – Assumptions cause miscommunication

Jerry Ballard says, “All miscommunications are the result of differing assumptions.” Haven’t you found that to be true? Sometimes the results are tragic. Often they can be comical, as was the case for a traveler between flights at an airport. She went to a lounge and bought a small package of cookies and then sat down to read a newspaper. She became aware of a rustling noise and looked to see a neatly dressed man helping himself to the cookies. She didn’t want to make a scene, so she leaned over and took a cookie herself, hoping he would get the message. As time passed, she thought she had been successful. But then she heard more rustling. She couldn’t believe it! He was helping himself to another cookie! There was only one cookie left. While she watched in disbelief, the man broke the remaining cookie in two, pushed half across to her and popped the other half into his mouth and left. The traveler was still furious some time later when her flight was announced. When she opened her handbag to get her ticket, imagining how shocked and embarrassed she was when she found her unopened package of cookies!

31 – What’s wrong with simple?

Ronnie Ding tells me that after a church service, the pastor shook hands with members of his congregation, and one of them commented on his sermon, saying, “Pastor, you are smarter than Albert Einstein.” The pastor was surprised and flattered by that statement, but he didn’t know how to respond. In fact, the more he thought about the comment, the more mystified he was by it. He couldn’t sleep properly for a week! The following Sunday, he finally asked the member what he meant by it. “You see,” the man responded, “Albert Einstein wrote something so difficult that only ten persons could understand him at that time. But when you preached, no one could understand you.”

Sue Cartun commented, “If you use lengthy or stilted language to try to impress, you cannot connect. The audience is simply waiting for the torture to end.”

Most often in such cases, the teacher isn’t a good communicator. While educators often take something simple and make it complicated, communicators take something complicated and make it simple.

32 – Talk to people, not above them

A pre-school aged boy was eating an apple in the backseat of the car.

“Daddy,” he said, “why is my apple turning brown?”

The boy’s father explained, “Because after you ate the skin off, the meat of the apple came in contact with the air, which caused it to oxidize, thus changing it’s molecular structure and turning it into a different color.”

There was a long silence, and then the boy asked, “Daddy, are you talking to me?”

A lot of people feel that way when a speaker or leader conveys complex ideas without making the effort to make them clear and simple. I know I’ve sometimes felt that way as a listener. When this occurs, it means the communicator doesn’t understand that shooting above people’s heads doesn’t mean you have superior ammunition – it means you’re a lousy shot.

33 – Tell the truth

A woman accompanied her very sick husband to the doctor's office. After the examination, the doctor asked the man to go out to the waiting room so that he could have a word with the woman. "Your husband's condition is grave." He told her. "If you don't do the following, your husband will surely die.":

- Fix him a healthy breakfast every morning, and send him off to work in a good mood.
- When he comes home, let him put his feet up and rest, making sure not to burden him with any worries or household chores.
- Prepare him a warm, nutritious meal for dinner every night.
- Have sex with him several times a week and satisfy his every whim.

On the way home, the wife drove in silence. The husband finally asked, "Well, what did the doctor say?"
"It's bad news," she replied. "He says you're going to die."

34 – Be vulnerable

When Bob Garbett was in the Marine Corps, a new second lieutenant fresh out of Officer Candidate School was assigned to his unit. Bob says the young man was obviously overwhelmed by his new assignment. But he handled it well.

"His first day," says Bob, "he called all of the non-commissioned officers together and told us he was counting on us to teach him.

He said, 'Don't hurt me. I'm trusting you.' I never forgot his words, and he quickly began to grow into his role in everyone's eyes."

35 – Teach them not to listen to doubting critics

In the book Principle-Centered Leadership, Stephen Covey tells how Columbus was once invited to a banquet where he was given the most honored place at the table. A shallow courtier who was jealous of him asked abruptly, "Had you not discovered the Indies, are there not other men in Spain who would have been capable of the enterprise?"

Columbus made no reply but took an egg and invited the company to make it stand on end. They all attempted to do it, but none succeeded, whereupon the explorer tapped it on the table, denting one end, and left it standing.

"We all could have done it that way!" the courier cried.

"Yes, if you had only known how," answered Columbus. "And once I showed you the way to the New World, nothing was easier than to follow it."

36 – Don't listen to critics

When you are navigating for others, remember that they can't make the whole trip in a day. The truth is that it's a hundred times easier to criticize others than to find solutions to problems. But criticism gets you nowhere.

Alfred Armand Montapert summed it up this way: "The majority see the obstacles; the few see the objectives; history records the successes of the latter, while oblivion is the reward of the former."

Help the people within your influence to ignore the critics and keep their eyes on the big picture. Show them that the best way to silence critics is to solve the problem and move on."

37 – Develop a high appreciation for life

Have you ever known people who complain about everything? Their soup's too hot. Their bed's too cold. Their vacation's too short. Their pay's too low. You sit side by side with them at a magnificent banquet, and while you enjoy every morsel, they tell you what's wrong with each and every dish. Such people don't appreciate life no matter how good it gets. A friend e-mailed me the story of a very "together" and independent ninety-two-year old lady who was moving into a nursing home. Since she was legally blind and her husband of seventy years had passed away, the move was her only option. She waited in the lobby of the facility for a long time before she was finally escorted down the corridor; her attendant described the room, down to the curtains hung on the windows.

"I love it," the elderly lady enthused. "But you haven't even seen the room yet. Just wait," the attendant responded. "That doesn't have anything to do with it," she replied. "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or now doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged. It's how I arrange my mind."

38 – Time is our most precious commodity

To know the value of *one year*...ask the student who failed the final exam.

To know the value of *one month*...ask the mother of a premature baby.

To know the value of *one week*...ask the editor of a weekly newsmagazine.

To know the value of *one day*...ask the wage earner who has six children.

To know the value of *one hour*...ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.

To know the value of *one minute*...ask the person who missed the plane.

To know the value of *one second*...ask the person who survived the accident.

To know the value of *one millisecond*...ask the Olympic silver medalist.

39 - What people will do for money

Several years ago, James Patterson and Peter Kim published the results of a national survey on morals in *The Day America Told The Truth*. They shared some of the things people said they would do for money. Here are some of the things people said they would be willing to do for \$10 million. They would...

- Abandon their entire family (25%)
- Become prostitutes for a week or more (23%)
- Give up their American citizenship (16%)
- Leave their spouse (16%)
- Withhold testimony, letting a murderer go free (10%)
- Kill a stranger (7%)
- Put their children up for adoption (3%)

If those findings don't show that some people believe money will bring them happiness, nothing does! Journalist Bill Vaughan joked that money won't buy happiness, but it will pay the salaries of a huge research staff to study the problem.

40 – Money doesn't change men

Automaker Henry Ford said, "Money doesn't change men, it merely unmask them. If a man is naturally selfish, or arrogant, or greedy, the money brings it out; that's all."

You are what you are - no matter how much or how little money you have.

Roman philosopher Seneca observed nearly two thousand years ago: "Money has yet to make anyone rich."

41 – Where is the work ethic?

Have you asked yourself lately, "Am I tired?" If the answer is yes, you may have a good reason for it, as this humorous story illustrates: Somewhere in the world there is a country with a population of 220 million. Eighty-four million are over sixty years of age, which leaves 136 million to do the work. People under twenty years of age total 95 million, which leaves 41 million to do the work. There are 22 million employed by the government, which leaves 19 million to do the work. Four million are in the Armed Forces, which leaves 15 million to do the work. Deduct 14,800,800 the number in state and city offices, and that leaves 200,000 to do the work. There are 188,000 in hospitals or insane asylums, so that leaves 12,000 to do the work. It is of interest to note that in this country 11,998 people are in jail, so that leaves just two people to carry the load. That's you and me - and brother, I'm getting tired of doing everything myself!

Unless you want to carry the whole load yourself, you need to be developing leaders.

42 - Unity multiplies strength

When people work for a common cause, they no longer add to their growth potential. Their unity multiplies their strength.

The following anecdote further illustrates my point: At a Midwestern fair, many spectators gathered for an old-fashioned horse pull (an event where various weights are put on a horse-drawn sled and pulled along the ground). The grand champion horse pulled a sled with 4,500 pounds on it. The runner-up was close, with a 4,400 pound pull.

Some of the men wondered what the two horses could pull if hitched together. Separately they totaled nearly 9,000 pounds, but when hitched and working together as a team, they pulled over 12,000 pounds.

43 - Momentum is the greatest of all change agents

The next time you find it difficult to adjust the environment in your company, keep in mind this simple fact from the laws of physics: Water boils at 212 degrees, but at 211 degrees, it is still just hot water. One extra degree, an increase of less than one-half of one percent, can make the difference between a pot of languishing liquid and a bubbling caldron of power. One degree can create a full head of steam - enough power to move a train weighing tons. That one degree is usually momentum.

With momentum, Leaders look better than they actually are.

With momentum, Followers increase their performance.

Without momentum, Leaders look worse than they actually are.

Without momentum, Followers decrease their performance.

44A - Little Red Hen

Even a person who is industrious and hardworking will finally get demoralized if production is discouraged rather than rewarded. You probably remember the children's story of the little red hen, the one who wanted help baking bread. Here is a modern version: Once upon a time there was a little red hen who scratched about the barnyard until she uncovered some grains of wheat. She called her neighbors and said, "If we plant this wheat, we shall have bread to eat. Who will help me plant it?" "Not I," said the cow. "Not I," said the duck. "Not I," said the pig. "Not I," said the goose. "Then I will," said the little red hen, and she did. The wheat grew tall and ripened into golden grain. "Who will help me reap my wheat?" asked the little red hen. "Not I," said the cow. "That's out of my classification," said the pig. "I'd lose my seniority," said the cow. "I'd lose my unemployment compensation," said the goose. "Then I will," said the little red hen. And she did. At last, it came time to bake the bread. "Who will help me bake the bread?" asked the little red hen.

44B - Little Red Hen

"That would be overtime for me," said the cow. "I'd lose my welfare benefits," said the duck. "If I'm to be the only helper, that would be discrimination," said the goose. "Then I will," said the little red hen. She baked five loaves and held them up for her neighbors to see. They all wanted some. In fact, they demanded a share. But the little red hen said, "No, I can eat the five loaves myself." "Excess profits!" yelled the cow. "Capitalist leech!" cried the duck. "I demand equal rights! Shouted the goose. The pig just grunted. Then the others hurriedly painted picket signs and marched around shouting obscenities. The government agent came and said to the little red hen, "You must not be greedy." "But I earned the bread," said the little red hen. "Exactly," said the agent. "That is the wonderful free enterprise system. Anyone in the barnyard can earn as much as he wants. But, under government regulations, the productive workers must divide their product with the idle." They all lived happily ever after. But the little red hen's neighbors wondered why she never again baked bread.

45 - Pay the price

No one, the experts said, would ever be able to run the mile in less than four minutes. Then, in 1954, a young medical student name Roger Bannister did the impossible by breaking that barrier. Today, every world-class runner can run the mile in less than four minutes. Why? Because one man decided to keep improving. One man decided to pay the price of personal growth. He was willing to lead. As a result, he created a climate for those achievers who followed him.

Are you the type of leader who is willing to pay the price and create a climate in which your people can follow you and emerge as the leaders of tomorrow?

46 - Encouragement

UCLA basketball coach John Wooden told players who scored to give a smile, wink, or nod to the player who gave them a good pass.

"What if he's not looking?" asked a team member.

Wooden replied, "I guarantee he'll look."

Everyone values encouragement and looks for it - especially when his leader is a consistent encourager.

47 – Develop your leaders like Oak Trees

It is often tempting for us to leave successful people where they are- to keep them in the same jobs. But we must keep in mind that we are doing more than just getting the job done well. We are building leaders, and that takes extra effort and time.

Angus J. MacQueen tells a story about James Garfield that illustrates this point. He says that prior to becoming President of the United States, Garfield was principal of Hiram College in Ohio. When a father asked if the course of study couldn't be simplified so his son might finish school sooner, Garfield responded, "Certainly. But it all depends upon what you want to make of your boy. When God wants to make an oak tree, He takes a hundred years. When He wants to make a squash, He requires only two months."

Give your leaders deep, broad roots by growing them slowly and varying their experiences.

48 - Being preoccupied with self

Probably the most formidable barrier to listening is preoccupation with self. A TV sketch illustrates this point really well:

WIFE: Dear, the plumber didn't make it in time to fix the leak by the hot water heater today. HUSBAND: Uh-huh.

WIFE: So the pipe burst and flooded the basement.

HUSBAND: Quiet. It's third down and goal to go. WIFE: Some of the wiring got wet and almost electrocuted Fluffy.

HUSBAND: Oh no, they've got a man open. Shoot! Touchdown.

WIFE: The vet says he'll be better next week.

HUSBAND: Can you get me something to eat? WIFE: The plumber finally came and said that he was happy our pipe broke because now he can afford to go on vacation. HUSBAND: Aren't you listening? I said I'm hungry! WIFE: Stanley, I'm leaving you. The plumber and I are flying to Acapulco in the morning.

HUSBAND: Can't you please stop all that yakking and get me something to eat? The trouble around here is that nobody ever listens to me.

49A - Create and Maintain Family Traditions

I want you to try an experiment. Get out a piece of paper and write down all the Christmas and birthday gifts you received when you were a kid up until you moved away from home. Take as much time as you need. How many are you able to remember? There may be a handful that really stand out, but if you're like most people, you have a hard time recalling most of them.

Now try this: List all the vacations you took with your family during those same years. Again, take as much time as you'd like. I'd be willing to bet that if you took vacations every year, you were able to remember more of them than the presents you received. Why? Because what makes families happy isn't receiving things. It's doing things together. That's why I recommend establishing family traditions.

49B - Create and Maintain Family Traditions

Traditions give your family a shared history and a strong sense of identity. Don't you remember how your family celebrated Thanksgiving as a child? How about Christmas? (And didn't you think yours was the right way when you got married and your spouse wanted to do something else?) The traditions your family kept helped you define who you were and who your family was.

Give thought to how you want to enjoy holidays, mark milestones, and celebrate rites of passage in your family. Start by basing traditions on your values. Add others you enjoyed from your childhood. If you're married, include those of your spouse as well. Mix in cultural elements if you want. Build some around your children's interests.

Give traditions meaning and make them your own.